Content Warning for:

*Animal death

*Death

*Violence/domestic violence

*Car crash

*Mention of vomiting

*Heartbeats

[Theme music: “Some Spooky Sh*t Is Going On Here” by Theo Goodwin]

INTRO

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The Underwood Collection, Episode 11: Til Death Do Us Part

[Theme ends.]

[Tape recorder clicks on. Static is heard throughout.]

MARS

Ulysses is still out. Honestly don't know why. If I were them I'd spend as much time as possible *out* of a place infested by ants.

[Rustling, voice raised.]

Not like that place would be *here* —

[Thud, like they've hit the table]

Long story short, I'm your humble narrator today. Apparently everything that records digitally is, quote — Oh, *that's* not a work-environment-friendly word, Ulysses.

[Chuckles.]

How *rude* of you. Anyway… Anyway, anything that uploads should be considered useless, something something use a tape recorder, blah, blah, blah, who cares.

[Rustling of papers. They blow a raspberry, and sigh deeply.]

Alright. Statement of Victoria Hagan regarding the death of her girlfriend, Annabel Blakeley, and the strange behavior she exhibited *after* the fact. It was given to the foundation on June 1st, 2015, Mars Barker recording.

Statement begins.

I know I should have gone to the police with this, but I'm sure they wouldn't believe most of it, and I don't know if they could even help. I don't want more people getting killed because of Annabel.

I guess… Well I guess I know when it really started. I feel like you'd rather if I just started there, but I can't. I just can't stand the thought of people only seeing her as… Whatever she is now. I'll try to be brief, okay?

I met Annabel about three years ago. We worked in the same company for a few months before we finally met at an office party. She was… She was really sweet… I'm sorry, I just… Okay. I'm okay. Annabel was really sweet. I hadn't really met anyone outside of my own department yet, so she introduced me to a few people, and we became friends. I fancied her basically immediately, and a couple of months later, she asked me out, and we started dating. Then, in February of this year, she moved in with me. That was around when she started to get weird.

We were doing fine for a bit, moving her stuff into my apartment, and all that, and then… We got into a pretty awful car crash. I was okay, the truck hit the left side of our car, but Annabel was driving, and she was hurt pretty… Pretty bad. I remember in the hospital, they were doing checks on me, but all I could think about was Annabel. They told me it would be fine, and that she was there too, but I didn't care. I saw that truck. It hit her

straight on, and I knew the chances that she wouldn't… That she wouldn't make it.

And… and I know this sounds stupid, but, I felt this, this heavy sense of dread while I was sat in that hospital, waiting for any news on Annabel. I was almost certain that when that doctor walked back into the waiting room I was going to be told she was dead. So when, six or so hours later, they finally told me I could go in and see her, I didn't care about their warnings that she would still need to stay for a while longer, and I didn't notice that the feeling of dread hadn't lifted, I just wanted to see her.

She looked horrible, lying in bed like that. The doctor had told me she would be sleeping, but she was so pale, so still. I barely believed she was still breathing. I felt like crying, I couldn't believe that this was actually happening to us.

The next few weeks were probably the worst weeks of my life. I spent most of that time in the hospital with Annabel. The doctors were kind enough, but I could tell they didn't think she was going to make it. I didn't know what to do. I'm not really a religious person, but there were definitely more than a few times I just begged anyone or anything that was out there to help her, and I think… I think something must've responded. After three weeks, she finally began to recover for real, instead of just barely hanging on like she

had been for the past twenty days. The doctors called it a miracle, and I believed them. Now… Now I'm not so sure.

I don't know if Annabel really came back after that. Maybe she died in that hospital. Maybe the thing I drove home that evening was already whatever it is she is now. I didn't think about that then though. She was so quiet, and pale, but I was too happy, and she just survived something horrific even though it seemed completely impossible so I ignored all the little warning signs, and later, even the much bigger ones.

Although, those started surprisingly fast. Only a few days later my cat started to- Well, you know how lots of cats will bring things they've killed to their owner? Like, as a gift or whatever? Athena's never really done that before, she'd kill things, sure, mostly spiders, but she'd usually just leave them where they were afterwards. But after Annabel came back from the hospital, she started to bring them to her.

It wasn't really a big thing. Nothing I look back at and beat myself up for not noticing. In fact, I don't know if I'd even realize they were connected if it weren't for what happened today… But I'll get to that. Gotta tell the story in order.

So Athena started to bring her little “gifts”, dead spiders mostly. Like I said, she likes those. So, um, she'd bring them to Annabel and, I guess this is sort

of morbid, but, we thought it was sort of cute. Annabel had been gone for a while, and we figured Athena had just missed her or something.

Annabel would always just pick them up... With her bare hands, which I complained was disgusting almost every time, and go to throw them away. Of course, I only actually saw them go in the trash once or twice, but why would I check? It wouldn't have even entered my mind that she'd lie about that.

But, almost a month after Annabel had gotten back from the hospital, after everything had settled back into our normal routine, and she had returned to work, I found a box of dead spiders in our closet.

We were planning on going out for dinner, somewhere nice, we hadn't really been out since before the accident, and I couldn't find my flats. Normally they'd be with my other shoes, but I figured I must have packed them away and forgotten about it, so, while Annabel waited impatiently downstairs, I searched our closet floor for the shoebox I usually kept them in.

I thought I'd found it, shoved into the back of the closet and hidden behind some shirts, so I yelled to Annabel that I'd be right down, opened the box, and almost screamed.

I'm not horribly afraid of spiders, but they do freak me out quite a bit, and a whole box of them, sprawled and unmoving, some of their bodies broken,

ripped into pieces or squashed well, it's pretty horrifying, fear of spiders or not.

I didn't really know what to do. It was obviously Annabel who'd done this, not like Athena could have filled and hid a shoebox, but I didn't know if I should say something or not. How do you ask someone about something like that? "*Hey honey, I was wondering what exactly those spider corpses are doing in our closet?*" It's just… I don't know. I wrote it off as some weird trauma thing or whatever, found my flats, and we went to dinner. I was definitely on higher alert around spiders after that though.

I don't know if it was just paranoia, but after that I did feel I saw a lot more spiders than usual around the house. I tried to make sure that Annabel was really throwing the dead ones out, but I could never be sure. I didn't see her pocket them or anything, but whenever I had the chance to check the box without her noticing there seemed to be more spiders… Once there was even a dead rat that I had definitely not seen Athena catch, and wasn't even sure if she'd be able to. I was starting to feel like I was going crazy with how on edge I was getting about this all.

Crazy or not, I knew I wasn't imagining how protective she got of it. She must have realized I'd found out, because one day I went to check, and the box wasn't there. That was when I finally confronted her about it, and she got *mad*. You have to understand, I've never seen Annabel get this angry

before, she rarely even raises her voice. But when I asked her about the box it was like someone had just killed her dog. She yelled something strange... Like, "*Did you touch it?!! Did you take them?! Where are they? I was saving them!*" When I told her I didn't have any idea what she was talking about, she called me a bitch and stalked out of the room, fuming. She avoided me for the rest of the day, and she must have slept on the sofa, because I didn't see her until I got up the next morning.

When I did though...

She was in the hallway, kneeling beside the door to our spare room, looking down at something, and muttering to herself.

I asked what she was doing, and when she looked up at me she seemed to be back to her normal, cheery self. In response to my question, she pointed to the carpet in front of her, and said, "They came back." Sure enough, there on the ground was a group of dead spiders, probably about five or six of them.

It was kind of freaky, so I asked if she was feeling okay, but when she said yes, and continued to act much more cheery then she had been last afternoon, I just ignored it in favour of having a nice breakfast with my girlfriend.

But obviously, at this point I knew there was something wrong. Collecting dead spiders? Weird, but I could brush it off. But getting this pissed about missing a few, and getting so… weird when she found them again? I was worried. I tried to convince her to see someone, but she refused, and insisted that she was fine.

I don't think she really trusted me after that. I couldn't find the box again, she started avoiding me and she stopped showing up to work. I kept trying to talk to her about it, but she continued to brush me off. We lived together, but I barely saw her, even at night for about two weeks. Soon, pets started disappearing in the neighborhood near our apartment, and… I got kind of nervous. I was scared Annabel had gone from collecting dead animals to making them.

I knew confronting her wouldn't do anything, so… I decided to follow her.

Like I said, I barely saw her for weeks, and she wasn't picking up my calls, so I had to wait. Luckily for me, she showed up not too long after I decided what to do. That exact night, actually, she came home for dinner.

As usual I tried to ask her where she'd been and convince her to stay for longer, maybe even go back to work, but she continued to brush me off. Other than that, though, and her vagueness about her behavior, she did

seem normal and I tried to push my plans out of my mind and just spend some time with her… While I was still unsure of her guilt.

I was expecting her to take off again, but she decided to stay at home that night, and, despite my best efforts, I ended up falling asleep.

Later that night, I was woken up when I felt Annabel get up, probably around three in the morning. I waited until I knew she was out of the room and got up to follow her. I could hear something in the living room, and, as quietly as possible, I snuck in.

As soon as I entered the room, I saw her, and regretted it.

She was standing in the middle of the room in her pyjama shirt, holding a knife and covered in something I tried to convince myself wasn't blood. Lying in front of her, with blank eyes, and a lifeless body, was Athena. I wanted to scream, but I knew that calling attention to myself would be a horrible idea, so instead I just stood there, frozen and holding back tears.

Annabel turned to look at me and at last, I gasped. Her eyes were blank and white, and her complexion was so pale that as the moonlight glowing through the window hit it, it almost seemed translucent, like if with a little more concentration, I could see straight through her skin to the bones underneath.

“Vic?” she asked, and as her mouth moved, I felt like I could see the muscles expanding and contracting beneath her skin as she formed the words. She said, “Oh, you're awake.” And her voice was so soft, and her face was so kind, and despite the current transparency of her face, it really seemed like I was looking at Annabel for the first time in months.

Still, I was cautious. From everything I could see, it was unmistakable that Annabel had just killed Athena, and, as her as she seemed right now, that was undoubtedly not in character under any sort of normal circumstances. So I put on my best ‘talking to a dangerous animal’ voice, and I tried not to make any sudden movements.

I didn't know what to say other than quietly whisper, “Hey,” as she came closer and asked what I was doing out of bed so early. I lied, obviously, and said I needed a drink. She touched my face, softly and her hands were so cold. She felt like death, and as she whispered to me to go back to bed, I didn't think I could see her breathing.

I don't know why, but in that moment I listened to her. I guess I was scared, and just wanted some sort of excuse to leave, but I kept my eyes away from Athena's body on the ground, and went back into our room to lie down and pretend to sleep. She didn't come back to bed after that, and the next morning the living room was almost spotless. In fact, if it weren't for

the slight red stain I could see on our living room rug, maybe I could have convinced myself I'd dreamt it.

I wanted to vomit. I did, actually. Annabel was nowhere to be seen so I finally let myself cry on the bathroom floor once I was done.

I lay there for a while, exhausted from crying and lack of sleep, before I decided it was time to call the police. I know it was selfish of me not to have done something from the very first time I felt something was wrong, and believe me, it was a real Spiderman moment for me, but it hadn't really felt real until then.

Of course, right when I'd gotten up and made my way to the kitchen where I'd left my phone, I heard the door open, and panicked.

I grabbed my phone off the table quickly and tried to sneak into the next room, but she easily caught me. I tried to act casual and ask her if she wanted any breakfast, not actually expecting her to say yes, but she nodded, took off her coat and followed me into the kitchen.

So, now I was stuck in the kitchen making eggs for some creepy thing that looked like my girlfriend. I tried to calm myself down about it, but her eerie silence and the fact that I couldn't get the image of her standing in the living

room, her bones and muscles shining through her skin, out of my head kept me tense the whole time.

Once I finally finished the scrambled eggs, I grabbed some bread and sat down at the counter. Of course I immediately made some sort of excuse that I can't remember, and got away as fast as I could.

I made it into the living room, and called the police. I almost called 911 I was so scared. Had to Google the non-emergency number. I guess that was a good thing considering that as soon as the man picked up the phone I looked over to the sofa and there, sleeping calmly on the cushions, was Athena. I dropped the phone and this time, I screamed.

I could hear the man talking, muffled, through the phone as I stepped forward and placed my hand on her side. She looked up at me and made a meowing noise, definitely alive, and I heard Annabel walk into the room behind me and pick up my phone. I turned around as she hung up and asked me what was going on.

I really didn't want to tell her the truth, but she'd seen my phone, and I didn't know what she'd do to me if she thought I was lying to her. At this point I was no longer scared of being killed by a normal crazy budding serial killer girlfriend and instead was terrified of a probably murderous potentially supernatural girlfriend. So I told her as much as I thought would keep me

alive. I told her I thought she'd hurt our cat and I wanted to… Call someone, but of course now that I'd seen that Athena was fine I realized that it was probably just a misunderstanding, and everything was perfectly normal, and I guess we could just go back to eating probably!

She just stared at me as I rambled, desperately trying to draw the attention away from my attempted phone call to literally anything else, and again, I could see the same blank expression in her eyes that she had last night.

“Oh? Well Athena's fine, right? So it was all just a misunderstanding…” She said softly, and her voice began to sound eerie as well. I nodded at her, terrified, and noticed the knife she had been holding in her left hand just as she began to advance across the room towards me. As fast as I could, I grabbed Athena off the couch, pushed past her right into the bathroom and locked myself in.

By this point I was shaking, even crying slightly, and basically just lay on the bathroom floor, holding my cat and trembling. I heard Annabel knock on the door a few times, but I just hid my face in Athena's fur, pushed the door closed harder and didn't say anything for about an hour.

By that time I figured Annabel had probably left, but I couldn't be sure. I tried listening at the door when I realized what had started all of this. Athena should be dead right now. The realization freaked me out again, and

I turned back around to look at her. She was just napping on the bath mat and as I looked closer I could see a line on her back where the fur seemed to be gone. I realized this must have been where she'd been cut last night. I felt myself starting to cry again. I guess she might have been some sort of monster too, but she hadn't acted weird and god, I couldn't deal with even thinking about that at the time. I guess I should now, but if I had in that moment I think I would have broken down completely.

So I checked out the bald spot, and sure enough, there was a horrifying scar running all across her back. It looked like it was at least a few years old, but obviously I knew it hadn't been there yesterday. It didn't seem to be hurting her anymore though, and I could hear Annabel walking around in the hallway, so I left it alone.

Annabel came back to the door, knocking again and started to call softly for me through the door. I started to sob all over again. God, I was so scared. I'd hoped she would leave again after I didn't answer, but after a few minutes of her calling from the other side I felt a sharp pain in my foot, and quickly pulled it back. There was a large cut on the bottom of my big toe, and it was bleeding heavily. She had stuck the blade of her knife under the door and was pushing it around, probably trying to stab me again. Our bathroom isn't that tiny so I was able to avoid it, but that didn't stop the fear from coming. I could feel my heart beating in my ears, and I felt a

surge of adrenaline rush through my body. I probably wasn't thinking straight, but I knew I couldn't just wait for her to starve me out.

I looked around for the best weapon I could find in a bathroom, which ended up being the towel rod, picked Athena up off the floor, and opened the door.

Annabel grabbed at my leg, and I smashed her arm with the towel rod, I heard the bone... Crack and she let go.

I made it out the door and rushed to the apartments next door to ours. I had to knock on a bunch of doors, before finally someone answered. I knew the guy who lived there in passing, Charles, I think, but he must have heard all my panicked knocking. He seemed confused, but let me inside and I locked his door before begging him to call 911.

We live on the second floor, so while he was dialing, I put Athena out on the balcony, and let her make her way down to the ground.

He finished giving his address, pushing on the door in case the locks didn't hold, and I heard Annabel yelling in the hall. She stormed up to the door, and slammed straight into it, pushing against him.

It was like she had some sort of super strength. Before, in our apartment, I had been able to keep her out fine with a locked door and a bit of pushing, but now she was able to break though easily, cracking the lock straight out

of the door as she did, and she cut straight through Charles’s hand as she pushed through.

I heard him yell as she shoved him to the ground, and tried to stab him again, but I guess he somehow fought back, and managed to get back on his feet, shoving her further into the room, and pulling his hand from the knife.

Unfortunately, that meant Annabel had full control of the knife again, and she used that chance to sink it deep into his chest, and he collapsed to the floor.

I screamed, but as Annabel continued to slash at him, I realized that during the struggle I'd been turned around, and Annabel was no longer between me and the doorway.

So I ran.

She seemed so much faster then she should have been as she chased and she almost caught up to me a couple of times. As you can see, she was even able to get me with the knife a few times.

I managed to somehow lose her after about a half hour of ducking through shops and stuff, but I was still so on edge and scared. That was this afternoon.

I really didn't know what to do. I'd already called the police, and like I've said, I was certain they wouldn't be able to help, so I just came here.

Statement ends.

MARS

Okay, and — Follow up. Charles Miller — The neighbor that Victoria mentioned — Was reported missing a few days after his call to the police, but that's it. No evidence of any murder.

I actually did the follow-up for this one, so I know this. Talked to Victoria on the phone. She gave me an address, said she would be staying with her brother's girlfriend, but when I went out to talk to her in person, the brother told me she'd never even asked to stay there though.

So I called again. You know. Professional courtesy, and all that. She was perfectly nice, just— Everything was completely wrong. "I really meant to call you sooner," Was what she said, um, but she'd been really busy with 'wedding preparations.'

Pretty sure that tells us everything we need to know. Girlfriend had a weird preoccupation with spiders, this lady blew it way out of proportion. I'm not saying that *nothing* was supernatural, but come on. You didn't notice a scar

on your cat. And whatever issues Annabel had seem to be resolved now, if they’re going on with the wedding, so...Spooky resolved.

End recording.

[Tape recorder clicks off.]

[Theme plays.]

OUTRO

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